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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQI GOVERNMENT, CONSTITUTION, REFERENDUM, NATIONAL RECONCILIATION; BAGHDAD

SUMMARY: Discussion on the Constitution, Referendum, and National Reconciliation were the major editorial themes of the daily newspapers on October 12, 2005. END SUMMARY.

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SELECTED COMMENTARIES

[1A.](#) "Yes. No"
(Al-Mada, independent, published this back-page editorial by Nazar Abdul Satar)

"The referendum is very crucial. If we examine our decision about voting 'Yes' or 'No' to the constitution, we will reach an interesting conclusion which will show us that the Iraqi people have increasingly begun to believe in the political process. The dissenting political groups have started to believe in the legitimacy of the political process even though they reject it. Therefore, this indicates that there is a significant change towards stability and positive interaction.

"The referendum can be interpreted as an agreement toward reconciliation and it is an admission of the legitimacy of the TAL's (Transitional Administrative Law) timetable. The referendum shows that democracy is progressing in Iraq--we will see voters who vote 'Yes' and at the same time we will see others vote 'No' to the constitution.

"In fact, the progress of the democratic process will not end with the announcement of the referendum's results but it will endure. The upcoming election is approaching and will be held after the referendum. At that time, there will be many chances available to crystallize opinions. The referendum has unified the Iraqi people to utter one word that will make a difference in Iraq. The Iraqi people will go to the ballot boxes and these boxes will determine their future. Participation in the referendum means that we accept and legitimize democracy. It also means that we trust one another and love our country. We all agreed to head to the ballot boxes because we believe in the future of the new Iraq."

[1B.](#) "Democracy of the Constitution"
(Al-Watan, affiliated with the Iraqi National Movement led by Dr. Hatem Mukhles)

"Iraqi politicians wrote a draft constitution for the country that has divided Iraqi political groups--there are some politicians who rejected the draft and at the same time there are others who have accepted it; we see some people who are optimistic about this draft while we see others who have reservations about it.

"These conflicting attitudes have caused many constitutional committee members, the National Assembly, and leaders of political parties to give their opinions on the constitution. Some of them said that disharmony over the draft constitution represents a healthy and democratic practice while others opined that the era of 99% votes in favor is over--that Iraq is now in the age of democracy, federalism and pluralism and it is now possible for disagreement amongst Iraqis. On the other hand, we have heard some say that this draft disengages Iraq from its Arab and Islamic identity because it states that Iraq is a part of the Islamic world and its people are part of the Arab nation. Actually, Iraq is not a merely part of the Arab nation but it is the main part of the Arab nation.

"Nevertheless, we are waiting for October 15th so that we

will know whether this draft will be approved or rejected. On this day, the people of Mesopotamia will give their final word about the draft constitution. They will prove to the entire world that they are the benefactors of the first civilization and those who taught humanity how to write and enact laws. On October 15th, the Iraqi people will practice democracy for the first time in their lives because it is the democracy of the constitution."

1C. "Yes to the Constitution"

(Baghdad, pro-coalition, affiliated with INA (Iraqi National Accord) led by Iyad Allawi published this page-two unattributed editorial)

"Iraq is a multicultural country comprised of many religions, sects, and ethnicities, all of whom have suffered from the unjust aggression of dictatorial policies and wars-conflicts that have resulted in infants recognizing the smell of gunpowder before taking their first sips of milk. "In the democratic environment following Saddam's downfall, you can always find someone calling for the rights of this sect or that religion, hoping to reap benefit (financial or otherwise) from the Iraqi people in a way that is close to a dictatorial style and doing their best to stand in the limelight, forgetting that all Iraqis have suffered. Although some Iraqis have suffered more than others all should enjoy rights because they have lived under oppression.

"We are in need of a common framework to structure our lives in adherence to the principles of justice and equality-which means a constitution. While it is true that our civilization was the first to establish democracy, there is a stark difference between those who memorize lessons and those who comprehend them completely. Democracy is an instrument we should implement in our dealings with each other, not merely mimicking what slogans proclaim.

"Therefore, each of us should accept concessions to make progress on Iraq. Voting 'Yes' to the constitution is a great patriotic duty and we can discuss unresolved issues at a later date in order to ensure everyone's rights. Voting 'Yes' to the constitution will clear the way for choosing a strong, elected government capable of amending whatever we want in the constitution. Moreover, voting 'Yes' to the constitution is best, because the alternative is so difficult and not even in the benefit of those who reject it."

1D. "The Homeland Comes First, and 'Yes' to the Constitution is in Our Interest"

(Al-Taakhi, affiliated with the KDP led by Al-Barzani, published this page-five editorial by Hussein Al-Jaff)

"The Iraqi tent is large and there is enough room for everyone in it; Iraq's interest must come first. The people's prosperity and development should be everyone's responsibility: officials, employees, or citizens. As the prophet Mohammad said, 'All of you are in charge and each one is responsible for his group.' Therefore, responsibility is collective, and the homeland should come first. Today our homeland needs us to stand with it in order to pass through the crisis; the international conspiracy against it, the Arab's ungratefulness, and the remnants of the former regime's aggressions against our homeland.

"The homeland obliges us to vote 'Yes' to its future on referendum day, because this constitution will bring us happiness in a free, pluralistic, federal, democratic country in which everyone will be equal. Justice, in dealing with everyone, will be the ideal characteristic of the new regime.

"On Saturday, Iraqis will stab the dagger of national unity into the hearts of Iraq's enemies and the enemies of its future."

1E. "The Constitution. Instead of Rice in Our Share of Rations!"

(Al-Mashriq, independent, anti-coalition, published this page-three editorial by Dr. Hameed Abdullah)

"All Iraqi families have received their copies of the draft constitution with their monthly food rations, which are always missing several items such as sugar, rice, tea, flour, and lentils.

"Our deprived people wish the government would distribute the rice and sugar together with the copy of the constitution because the Iraqi people have suffered from a lack of sugar and rice during the oppressive embargo previously imposed upon Iraq. In addition, terrorism prevents vehicles that carry food supplies from reaching the warehouses of the Ministry of Trade. May God help the Iraqis who have suffered from the embargo and terrorism.

"Our food rations are shrinking day by day and we can predict that one day the Iraqi family will receive a matchbox as the only item available through food rations. We are sure that the Ministry of Trade's employees will blame terrorism rather than corruption. Poor Iraqis wish the government would distribute the draft constitution with rice. In this way, all Iraqis will be interested in reading this draft. As it is now, they have a copy of the constitution but they do not have rice or sugar and for this reason they will leave the copy on the shelf because they are not interested in reading it. Then, Iraqis will go to the ballot boxes to have their say on the constitution and I am sure that they will feel that they are following their politicians' desires--just like the old saying (people follow their king's religion).

"The word of yes or no on the constitution means nothing to Iraqis. The Iraqi people elected those who they thought were qualified and perfect to lead the political process but then, following the elections, they were shocked. Nothing changed, especially concerning the deterioration of the security situation, which is still worsening. Iraqis will say a resounding 'yes' but they will say this for the rice, tea, sugar, security, law and justice."

F. "Faithful Day"

Al-Adala, affiliated with SCIRI led by Abdul Aziz Al-Hakim, published this page-three editorial by Dr. Ali Khalif:

"With just 72 hours left, until Iraqis are due to decide on the draft constitution in the upcoming referendum, meetings, negotiations and ongoing talks among Iraqi political leaders are an attempt to add some amended articles to the constitution to gain Sunni support for the draft. This attempt reflects the patience of Iraqi national forces trying to respond to difficult Sunni demands and reach something that Sunnis can agree on to hold all Iraqis together for the coming decisive moments.

"Last minute talks and dialogue among Iraqis political forces will continue until national forces guarantee that Sunnis are satisfied and have confidence that the draft constitution will represent their interests and that Iraqi national forces have a real desire to maintain their country's unity and to ensure the participation of all sects in the political process in Saturday's vote. Sunni demands have shown that they reject all kinds of changes and they are still sticking to the once-dominant Sunni minority idea that would reject the constitution.

"Regardless what negotiations and meetings result in, all Iraqis are aware that the constitution represents unique guarantees to move Iraq to a better future and start Iraq's rebuilding stage--voting 'Yes' will open a new bright and secure life, and pave the start for the next election.

"To begin with, something is better than nothing--yes there are reservations about some of constitution's articles but this is the best among the possibilities; especially since Iraq has just emerged from a dictatorial regime and suffered for a long time. Now should be the time to determine a free and democratic future.

"Iraq's enemies are planning to make the constitution fail, but Iraqis are aware that the draft constitution represents a bright future for Iraqis and that referendum day will be the faithful day for all our martyrs in the mass graves of Halabja, Al-Anfal and all those who have sacrificed their lives for such a great day and for their faith and principles."

KHALILZAD